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BANKHEAD FARMS PROJECT

Jasper, Alabama

Official Name: Bankhead Farms.

Location: In northwest quarter of Alabama, in Walker County, 5 miles north of the City of Jasper and 45 miles northwest of Birmingham.

Number of Units: 100 houses and barns which contain garage space, cow stall, chicken house and small granary.

History of Project: Initiated by the Division of Subsistence Homesteads of the Department of the Interior in the latter part of 1933, the project was transferred to the Resettlement Administration May 15, 1935. The first unit was completed April 30, 1936, and the second during the following winter.

Purpose of Project: The Bankhead Farms Project was initiated as a garden-homes project to relieve the uneconomical and unhealthful concentration of industrial population in the vicinity of Jasper. By means of subsistence gardens, occupant families are being given an opportunity to enjoy the benefits to be derived from a healthy environment, and to supplement their earnings from industry, commerce, or mining by the raising of a small cash crop and by the production of food for home consumption.

Project Description: A tract of about 2000 acres of land whose soil is suitable for the production of common garden vegetables was selected as the project site. The topography of the land is nearly level, gently undulating. Those portions subject to soil erosion are terraced and wooded portions are being carefully conserved. Individual wells, automatic electric pumps and storage tanks supply water. Sewage disposal is furnished by individual septic tanks. While gas is not available, electricity is provided by power lines of a private utility company. Transportation facilities are ample and residents have easy access to nearby cities by railroad and bus lines.

House Description: Each of the 100 tracts, ranging from 9 to 25 acres, contains a frame house, complete with kitchen, living room, bedrooms, and front and back service porches. The houses are heated by fire-places. 42 houses have four rooms; 49 have five rooms; and 9 have six rooms. Variety in construction has been provided by building the houses in six architectural designs.

The Homesteaders: The occupants selected for the project have been residents of Walker County whose employment is conveniently located with respect to the project. Nearly all have full-time employment, incomes averaging about $1440.00 per year. All are white, the majority native, and with farm background. A variety of industrial, commercial and professional occupations are represented in the group.

The occupants are members of a community civic organization which meets twice monthly for the discussion of community affairs and problems. The women have a Home Demonstration Club and are interested in landscaping and beautifying lawns and roadsides. The young people have their own social clubs and Boy Scout troop.

A loan has been granted for a producers' cooperative to facilitate cultivation of land. Every resident has a home garden. Most have enough chickens for family use and many have pigs and cows. Canning of fruits and surplus vegetables is done in nearly every home.